United Nations

Daily Highlights

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ General Assembly, acting without vote, grants observer status to Sovereign Military Order of Malta; approves appointment of Karl Theodor Paschke as Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services.

+ Secretary-General sends Special Envoy Piriz-Ballón to Dushanbe with view to resuming inter-Tajik negotiations.

+ Secretary-General recommends that General Assembly establish United Nations Human Rights Verification Mission in Guatemala for six months.

+ Commission of Experts to leave for Rwanda and neighbouring countries on 27 August to investigate grave humanitarian violations and possible acts of genocide.

+ Secretary-General revises cost estimate for UNAMIR to $100 million for period 5 April to 30 September.

+ UNPROFOR says all 19 crossing points into United Nations Protected Areas in Croatia are now open.

+ Special Representative Gbeho warns Somalis that attacks on UNOSOM II will meet prompt, firm and decisive response.

+ Mozambique demobilization process virtually complete, but formation of new army falls behind schedule.

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The General Assembly today granted observer status to the Sovereign Military Order of Malta by adopting, without a vote, a resolution sponsored by 71 States. The Assembly had not granted such status since 1990, when the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) became an observer. The United States dissociated itself from the consensus on granting observer status to the Order, while the United Kingdom said it would not have supported the action had there been a vote.

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The Assembly also approved the appointment of Karl Theodor Paschke, a German national, as Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services. The Assembly decided in July to establish an Office of Internal Oversight Services to undertake actions for monitoring, auditing, inspections and investigations in the United Nations.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has asked Special Envoy Ramiro Piriz-Ballón to go to Tajikistan as soon as possible to use his good offices and to discuss confidence-building measures with a view to resuming inter-Tajik negotiations. The Secretary-General took that action in response to the deteriorating situation there, and following Mr. Piriz-Ballón's meeting yesterday with the representatives of the Russian Federation, Uzbekistan, Iran, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has recommended that the General Assembly establish the United Nations Human Rights Verification Mission in Guatemala (MINUGUA) for six months. In a report dated 18 August, he said the Mission would verify implementation of the Comprehensive Agreement on Human Rights, which was signed recently by the Guatemalan Government and the Unidad Revolucionaría Nacional Guatemalteca (URNG). It could thus make a decisive contribution to efforts to end a persistent pattern of human rights abuses in the country. The Mission would require an estimated 220 international staff members, as well as 60 police and 10 military liaison officers.

The Secretary-General said establishment of the Mission was a matter for the General Assembly, rather than the Security Council, as it would be concerned only with human rights in its initial phase. The Assembly today decided to reopen its consideration of the situation in Central America in order to examine his recommendation.

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The Commission of Experts established to investigate grave humanitarian violations, including possible acts of genocide, in Rwanda will leave Geneva for a visit to that country on 27 August, according to a United Nations spokesman. The Commission will also visit Tanzania, Burundi, Zaire and other countries where Rwandan refugees fled, and will spend a total of two weeks gathering evidence.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) has been continuing to promote confidence-building measures between the new Government and the Rwandan people. The Government has admitted that isolated incidents of retribution have occurred, but has said that it has imprisoned 60 suspects, and that they will be dealt with severely if found guilty.

Special Representative Shahryar Khan met yesterday in Nairobi with 15 European Ambassadors to appeal for support for his reconstruction plan, the

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spokesman said. He reported that Kigali's water supply had been restored, and that work was underway to restore the electricity supply.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has revised the cost estimate for the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) to almost $100 million for the period 5 April to 30 September. The revised estimate is $37 million higher than the commitment authorized by the General Assembly for the period 5 April to 31 October. The revision was needed because the Security Council expanded UNAMIR's mandate to include additional humanitarian responsibilities, and increased its force level to 5,500 troops, in May.

In a report to the Assembly dated 17 August, the Secretary-General noted that efforts had been made to minimize the need for extra resources. Surplus rations and equipment worth almost $23 million had been transferred to UNAMIR from the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II), and that figure had been taken into account in the revised estimate.

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All 19 crossing points into the United Nations Protected Areas (UNPAs) in Croatia are now open, a spokesman for the Organization announced today. The crossing points, which had been agreed to in the 29 March cease-fire agreement, had been blockaded by Croatian demonstrators. In a Presidential statement on 12 August, the Security Council said the blockades and related impediments imposed by Croatian authorities -- such as tolls and taxes for the use of roads and airports -- were inadmissible.

The spokesman expressed concern that the demonstrators might reimpose the blockade, and said the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) was monitoring the situation closely.

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Special Representative Victor Gbeho has strongly condemned the killing on Monday of seven Indian soldiers serving with the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II), adding that he will not hesitate to expose the perpetrators of the despicable crime. He said the emerging pattern of hostile acts and attacks against UNOSOM II personnel and other international staff would not be allowed to continue with impunity.

The Special Representative went on to warn that future attacks or harrassment would be "promptly, firmly and decisively responded to in accordance with UNOSOM II's rules of engagement."

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The process of demobilizing soldiers in Mozambique is almost virtually complete, and the process of verification has begun, a United Nations spokesman announced today. However, he said that the formation of the new

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army was behind schedule, and that it was unlikely to be accomplished by the October elections.

Meanwhile, 71 percent of the electorate -- estimated at 8 million people -- had been registered by 14 August, according to the spokesman. The first disbursements from the trust fund for political parties have been made, with 16 parties each receiving $50,000.

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